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ABSTRACT

Media Panel is a research program directed toward media habits, causes and effects of TV use among children and adolescents, and viewer/media interaction in general. Results of this longitudinal study from 1970 to the present are presented in three sections focusing on the early work of the group, the preschool panel, and the primary school panel. The final goals of the project are to describe: (1) how TV enters the life of the preschool child, how it becomes a dominant factor, and how its importance is then reduced; (2) the relative importance of generational and maturational effects on the above process; (3) the possible consequences of TV on children's self image, job preferences, tendency to stereotype, and their image of society; and (4) the role of TV and other mass media as functional alternatives to and compensatory mechanisms for, satisfactory social relations. A list of references is attached. (JVP)

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Media Panel

A Presentation of a Program

IR000 401

media panel

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Report No. 4
November 1978

Karl Erik Rosengren
Swen Windahl

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1. INTRODUCTION

MEDIA PANEL is a research program at present carried out at the Department of Sociology, University of Lund, and at the Department for Information Techniques, the University College of Växjö, Sweden. The focus of the program is directed towards media habits, causes and effects of TV use among children and adolescents. Dr. Sven Windahl, Växjö, and Dr. Karl Erik Rosengren, Lund, are co-directors of the program, the main features of which will be described in this paper. The program is funded by the Bank of Sweden tercentenary Foundation.

2. AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Within mass communication research it has been customary to make a distinction between two main research traditions, the effects research tradition and the uses and gratifications research tradition. In simplified terms the effects tradition is characterized by means of the question 'What do the media do with their public?', while the uses and gratifications tradition has been characterized by means of the question 'What does the public do with the media?'

Effects research has its roots in studies carried out during the 20's and 30's, trying to map the effects of the new mass media emerging during these decades, film and radio. Klapper (1960) has given a classic summary and discussion of this research tradition, 'The Effects of Mass Communication'. Good overviews are regularly published in the Annual Review of Psychology (cf. Liebert & Schwartzberg 1977).

The first studies within the uses and gratifications tradition were published during the 40's. From the middle of the 60's and onwards, this tradition has experienced a revitalization. Recent developments are summed up in a volume edited by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz (1974), 'The Uses of Mass Communications', which also serves as a natural platform for continued research within this tradition.

Uses and gratifications research was introduced into Sweden by the psychologist Karl-Erik Wärneryd and his group at the Stockholm School of Economics (cf. Lundberg & Hultén, 1968, in Swedish). Interesting research has been

carried out in this tradition also at the department of audience research of the Swedish Radio (the PUB), (Linné 1971, Feilitzen 1972, 1976, Kjellmor 1973). At the Department of Sociology, University of Lund, a third Swedish group has been working in this tradition since 1969.

In 1969, the present writers started the first in a series of studies within the uses-and-gratifications tradition later to be published in several reports: Rosengren & Windahl 1972 a,b, Rosengren 1974, Rosengren et al. 1976, Rosengren & Windahl 1977; cf. also Johnsson-Smaragdi 1978 a,b (in Swedish), Hedinsson & Smaragdi 1978 and Sonesson, forthcoming (in Swedish). In connection with this work a research group has gradually emerged, which now forms the core of the Media Panel Program.

A significant feature of the work carried out within the group has been a growing tendency to combine the two perspectives of the effects tradition and the uses and gratifications tradition, otherwise often regarded as competing alternatives. Thus the two questions quoted above ('What do the media do with their public', and 'What does the public do with the media?') are built into the same investigation - an approach which has proved both fruitful and demanding.

It is a fruitful approach for the obvious reason that the two questions cannot actually be given any meaningful separate answers. The use made of the mass media by their public must be supposed to be due to a more or less deliberate motive to obtain certain effects - the gratifications. And the effects, in their turn, depend upon the quantity and quality of the media use.

It is a demanding approach because it involves a whole number of subtle, partly unconscious, dynamic relationships between the media and their public, relationships which often form part of rather slow processes of growth and change. All this suggests that the answers to our two main questions should be arrived at by way of quite specific research techniques.

The slow processes of growth and change are best studied when the change is really salient, which points to the fruitfulness of studying the media use of children and adolescents, characterized among other things, by increasing, culminating and declining TV use, as the child matures from early school age

till the teens of late primary school. These processes, furthermore, can hardly be mapped in their total complexity by means of measurement on one occasion only, something which suggests the necessity of a panel design (that is, the same subjects are approached more than once). Finally, the subtle relationships between the media and their public are best studied by means of indexes and scales constructed especially for the purpose, with known reliability and validity.

A combination of effects research with uses-and-gratifications research, then, would seem to demand panel studies of the media habits of children and adolescents, preferably using established, already tested instruments of measurement. At the Departments of Sociology in Lund and Information Techniques in Växjö we have been working with research along these lines since 1974. This research, in its turn, has grown naturally from our earlier work within the uses and gratifications tradition carried on since 1969. The earlier work within our group, as well as the present developments, will be presented in the following sections of the paper.

3. THE EARLY WORK OF THE GROUP

The first work of the group aimed at theoretically explicating and empirically operationalizing the concept of parasocial interaction, originally presented in a seminal paper by Horton & Wohl (1956). Simplified, the concept may be said to refer to a special type of media-public relations, in which the public establishes almost personal relationships with one or more well-known media personalities, so-called personae. These personae, in their turn, more or less consciously anticipate these reactions of the public and try to adapt their media appearance to them.

Such parasocial interaction of the public with media personalities may be regarded as a functional alternative to real, face-to-face interaction. People who for some reasons have small possibilities for real social interaction (have a low interaction potential) could be expected to show more than an average tendency to parasocial interaction, using it as some sort of complement or substitute to obtain compensation for what their own social reality denies them, or, possibly, to escape from a too demanding everyday life. The use made of the media by the individual, then, is to some extent

determined by variations in the social situation of the individual - a typical uses-and-gratifications argument. Two surveys undertaken in 1969 and 1970 in two different towns in southern Sweden provided empirical support for these hypotheses; the results were published in Rosengren & Windahl (1972 a,b).

In two later surveys the argument was enlarged upon in two ways. Two personality characteristics relevant in the context were included: intro/extraversion and neuroticism measured by means of the standardized Swedish versions of the well-known personality test developed by Eysenck. And the uses-and-gratifications approach was combined with an effects approach: neuroticism was (tentatively) regarded as a possible consequence of different unsatisfactory combinations of intro/extraversion, parasocial interaction and potential for actual interaction.

The results of these two surveys were presented to a symposium on uses and gratifications research convened by the Swedish Radio in 1973 (cf. Rosengren & Windahl 1977). They were consistent with existing theory and yet somewhat surprising. High potential for actual interaction does not seem to be something unequivocally positive. Combined with introversion it may lead up to increased neuroticism, especially for those who tend to have a parasocial relationship to the media content consumed (possibly established in order to mitigate the unhappy combination of high interaction potential and introversion).

These and other results pointed to the necessity of broadening the theoretical frame of reference to include other social background variables than interaction potential, and other media relations than parasocial interaction.

In the paper by Horton & Wohl (1956) referred to above, parasocial interaction was described as imaginary interaction with a media <u>persona</u>, in which the spectator takes part without losing or giving up his/her own identity. The two dimensions of interaction and identification may be combined, and we then get four types of relations, as in Figure 1 (cf. Rosengren & Windahl 1972). Parasocial interaction, (PSI), then, may be seen as one of four possible viewer relations to TV content consumed.

		Interaction: Yes	Interaction: No
Identification	Yes	Capture	Solitary Identification
	No	Parasocial Interaction	Detachment

Figure 1. A typology of Viewer Relations to TV Content
(From Rosengren & Windahl 1972 a)

It may be hypothesized that especially the relations named 'Capture', if regularly indulged in, will tend eventually to result in a more stable relationship, long term identification, existing not only during the fleeting moments of actual TV viewing but for longer periods of time. The existence of such relationships would seem to be common especially among adolescents. Therefore, the efforts of the group were directed at developing reliable and valid scales for measuring these two types of relationships among adolescents, as well as that of parasocial interaction. The prevalence of such relationships was related to a number of background variables, and the results were presented in Rosengren et al (1976).

The direct outcome of this work was the establishment of three scales for the measurement of Capture, PSI and Long-term identification, respectively. An indirect outcome was the insight that TV relations among children and adolescents form part of a complex net of media relationships, influenced by and influencing the social situation of the child or adolescent. A broad paradigm tentatively structuring the complex relationships between social background factors, media use and its consequences was presented in Rosengren (1974); cf. Figures 2 and 3. It is this broad interplay between social factors and media use and habits among children and adolescents, as well as its development over time, which stands at the centre of the Media Panel program.

1	Certain basic human needs of lower and higher order	under interaction with
2	Differential combinations of intra- and extra-individual characteristics	and also with
3	The structure of the surrounding society, including media structure	result in
4	Differential combinations of individual problems, being more or less strongly felt,	as well as
5	Perceived solutions to these problems,	the combination of problems and solutions constituting
6	Differential motives for attempts at gratification-seeking or problem-solving behavior	resulting in
7	Differential patterns of actual media consumption	and
8	Differential patterns of other behavior,	both behavior categories giving
9	Differential patterns of gratifications or non-gratifications	and, possibly, affecting
10	The individual's combination of intra- and extra-individual characteristics	as well as, ultimately
11	The media structure and other social, political, cultural and economic structures in society.	

Figure 2. Outline for a Paradigm of Uses and Gratifications Research (From Rosengren 1974)

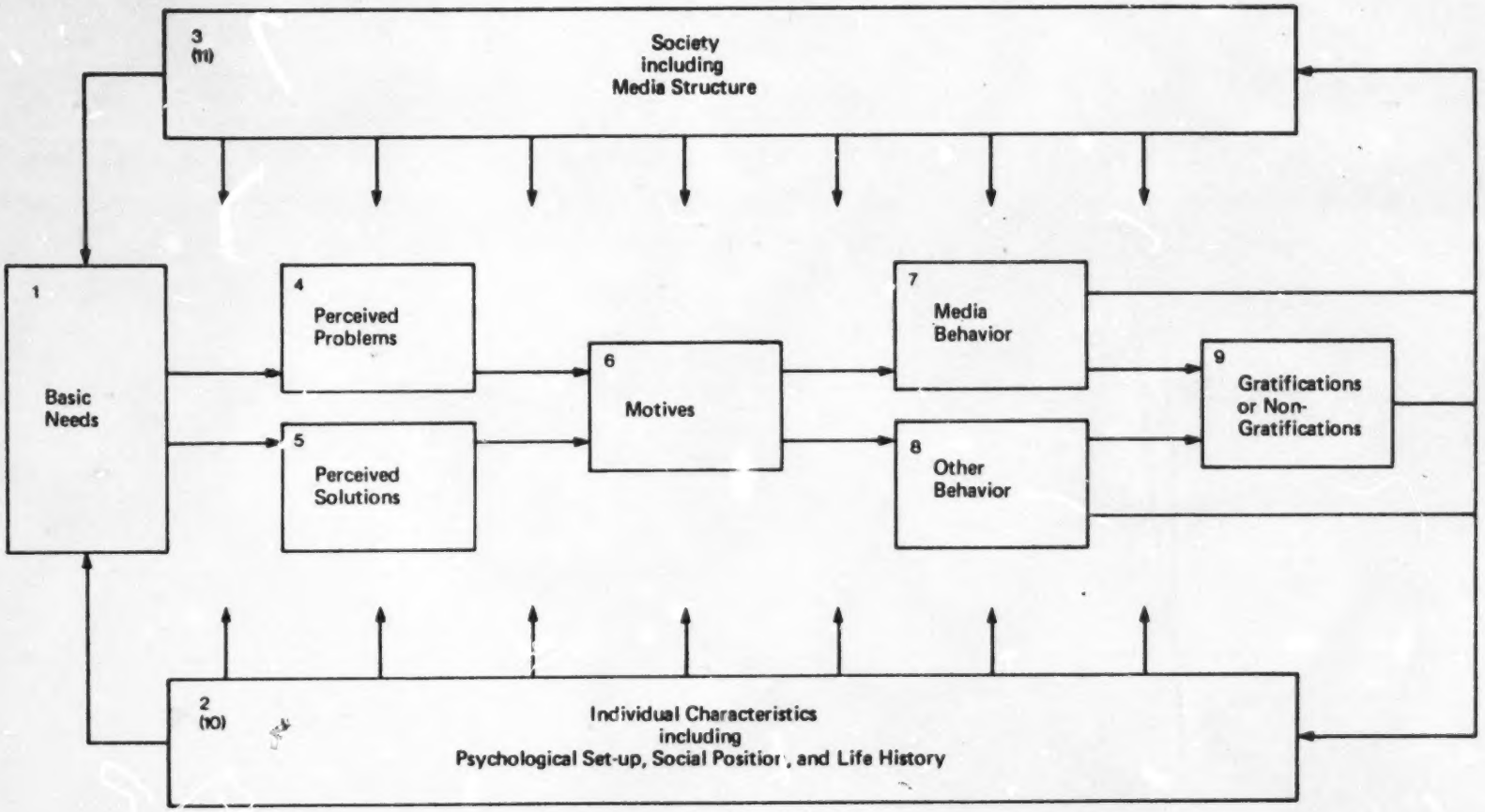

Figure 3. Visualized Paradigm for Uses and Gratifications Research
(From Rosengren 1974)

4. MEDIA PANEL

4.1. The Pre-school Panel

When studying the social origins of media habits and their development over time it is only logical to start by studying very small children. Since 1974, therefore, the group has been interested in pre-school children. In 1975, under the direction of Inga Sonesson, FK, about 250 six-year-old pre-school children and their mothers were interviewed in Malmö (town in southern Sweden with some 250,000 inhbts). The mothers were interviewed in their homes, the children in pre-school, by different interviewers (second term students of sociology, especially trained for the task). The children interviewed were a random sample of all six-year-old pre-school children in Malmö, and 80 % of the sample were interviewed.

The interview schedule covered the following areas:

1. SES of the family
2. TV habits and TV relations of the mothers
3. Mother's attitudes to TV and to the TV habits of her child
4. Emotional status and social relations of the child
5. TV habits and TV relations of the child

The relationships hypothesized between the five blocks of variables is visualized in Figure 4.

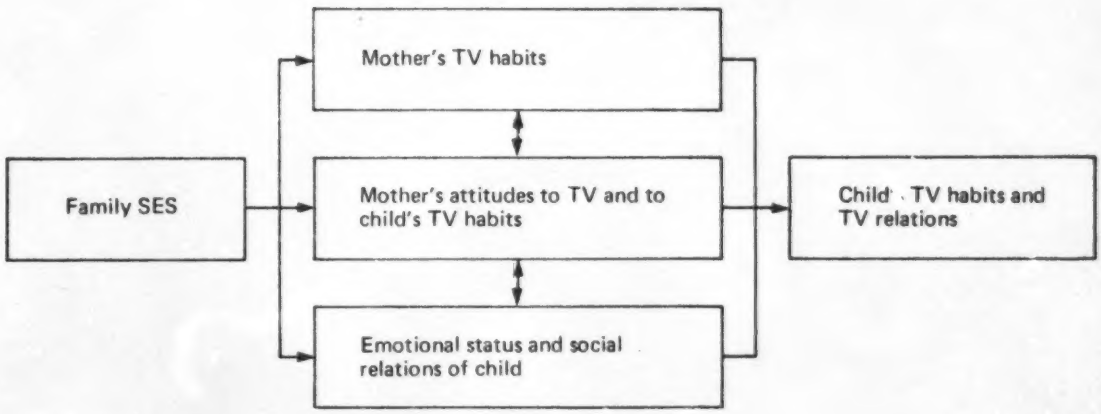
Mother's TV habits
Family SES
Mother's attitudes to TV and to child's TV habits
Child's TV habits and TV relations
Emotional status and social relations of child

Figure 4. Conceptual Scheme for the Pre-school Panel

The variables within the five different blocks were measured by the best instruments available to the group, sometimes developed within the group, sometimes borrowed from outside. The attitudes of the parents to TV and to the TV habits of their children, for instance, were measured by a Swedish version (developed and pre-tested by Inga Sonesson in several pilots) of Ray Brown's TV attitude scales (Brown et al 1974, Brown & Linné 1976). The factor structure, incidentally, showed a quite striking parallelity with the corresponding English factor structure.

The emotional status of the children was measured by means of a rating scheme developed by William-Olsson (1973) for identifying disturbed behaviour in six-year-old pre-school children. These ratings were made by the teachers of the children.

The various measuring instruments, of course, had to be adapted to the developmental level of the children. The TV habits of the children, for instance, were measured by questions to the children and their mothers, as well as with picture tests developed within the project, building upon suggestions from Ray Brown and from the researchers at the Swedish Radio. The methodological study of the results obtained by means of the different instruments (for instance, comparisons between data stemming from the children and their mothers, respectively, and concerning the children's TV consumption and their fear of TV content) would form an interesting area of study in its own right.

The main task of the project, however, is to investigate the relationships within and between the five blocks of variables mentioned above. The bulk of these results will be presented in 1979 in a dissertation by Inga Sonesson. For obvious reasons they cannot be anticipated here. It would seem, however, that already at the comparatively early age of the pre-school child the TV habits, and especially the TV preferences, are patterned along sex lines. Among the traditional background variables, the level of education of the mothers has proved most important in this connection. The TV attitudes mentioned above, however, also play a part. The TV habits of the children are influenced mainly by the general evaluation of the medium by the mothers, but also by certain family norms about socialization etc.

One main task of the project is to investigate whether the TV habits of children with emotional disturbances are different from those of other

children. The results obtained so far suggest that they are. Children showing both aggressivity and anxiety tend to a greater extent than other children to look at, and to prefer, exciting programmes, but to a lesser extent tend to identify and vicariously interact with the personae of the TV screen. Especially the latter result is contrary to much earlier research and also, perhaps, to common sense ideas, although there are some parallels to be found in the literature. A more detailed discussion of these and related phenomena will be presented in Inga Sonesson's dissertation.

Further light will be thrown on these complex interrelationships by means of data from the following two waves of the panel (to be collected in early 1979 and in 1981). The material collected in the second wave will form the basis for a dissertation by Annelis Jönsson, FK. This wave, as well as the last one, will be collected in close connection with the corresponding waves in the primary school panel. The two panels are linked together by the fact that in the last wave the children of the pre-school panel will have reached the fifth grade of the primary school - the grade where the main group of the primary school panel was approached in the first wave. They will then get approximately the same questionnaire as the members of the primary school panel.

4.2. The Primary School Panel

The design of the primary school panel is shown in Figure 5. It will be seen that the design includes a main panel of some 500 adolescents and their parents, as well as two "side panels" of 250 children and parents each. This design admits cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies and 'diagonal' studies (for instance, nine-graders in '76, '78 and '80). By means of this design we will be able to distinguish as effectively as possible between generational and maturational effects, otherwise notoriously difficult to disentangle even in panel studies.

The aim of this panel is to cover, as comprehensively as possible (given obvious restrictions in time, personnel and money) the causal chain starting with sociological and psychological conditions for media use (primarily TV), over the media use itself and the various relationships it entails between the media and their public, up to possible consequences of that use. The panel, then, represents an attempt at combining the effects tradition and the uses

and gratifications tradition mentioned in sections 2 and 3 above.

Born	Wave (Time, grade, age) I 1976	II 1978	III 1980	N
1961	9th (15 yrs)	-	-	250
1963	7th (13 yrs)	9th (15 yrs)	-	250
1965	5th (11 yrs)	7th (13 yrs)	9th (15 yrs)	500
1967	-	5th (11 yrs)	7th (13 yrs)	250
1969	-	-	5th (11 yrs)	250

Figure 5. Design for the Primary School Panel

Schematically the different blocks of variables and the hypothesized relationships between them may be graphically visualized as in Figure 6. (As usual in cases like this, the arrows indicate only the main causal links hypothesized between the blocks.) In each of the six boxes we have worked with a number of variables and groups of variables. Table 1 provides a somewhat more detailed overview of the variables under study. A comparatively large amount of work - including two pilots and the preparatory investigation presented in Rosengren et al 1976 - has been invested in the construction and preliminary testing of the questionnaires, the scales etc. It is obvious, however, that a study as broadly conceived as the present one cannot possibly build exclusively on instruments developed within the group itself. Indeed, this would not even have been desirable, for it would have meant decreased comparability with

respect to other, related studies.

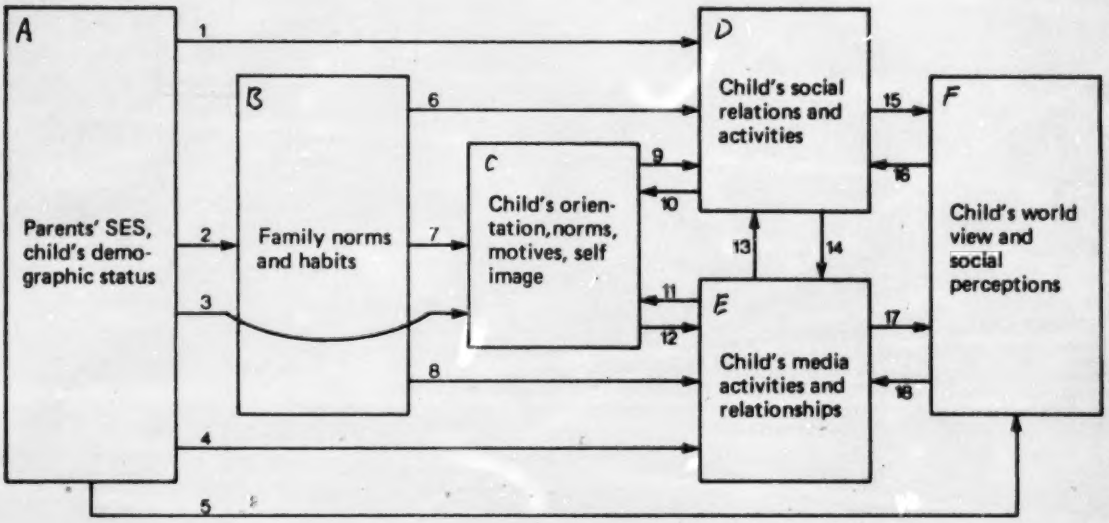

Figure 6. Conceptual Scheme for the Primary School Panel

Instead we freely borrowed ideas, instruments, questions etc wherever we found them. Due academic acknowledgements of these borrowings will be given, of course, in the reports to come, but we would like even now to mention gratefully especially Torbjörn Broddason, Jay Blumler, Ray Brown, Steven Chaffee, Cecilia von Feilitzen, George Gerbner, Peter Gould, Bradley Greenberg, Hilde Himmelweit, Silja Jundin, Denis McQuail, Grant Noble and Anita Werner, all of whose preceding work and experiences we have been drawing upon in one way or the other (and often in more ways than one).

The various measuring instruments thus brought together in our questionnaires have been used by now in two waves of the primary school panel (autumns 1976, 1978), in accordance with the panel design of Figure 5. In each wave, roughly

A. Parents' SES, Child's demographic status

Parents'		Child's	
	age		sex
	education		age
	marital status		grade
	social class		siblings (age and sex)

B. Family norms and habits

Parents' TV habits and preferences
dependence on TV
selectivity in TV use
attitude to TV and to child's TV use (Brown, Sonesson)
knowledge about, and control of child's TV consumption
interaction with children (according to parents)

Family communication pattern (Chaffee et al)

C. Child's orientation, motives, interests, norms

Family/peer orientation (Bowerman)
Motives for TV consumption (Greenberg)
Special interests (sports, hobbies etc)
Attitudes to own TV consumption
Self image (Noble, Rosenberg)
Emotional status (William-Olsson)

D. Child's social relations and activities

Interaction with siblings
with parents (according to child)
with peers
Number of friends, best friend, amount of interaction
Sociometric status
Special activities (sports, hobbies, clubs etc)

E. Child's media relations and activities

Media consumption (TV, radio, newspapers, comics, weeklies, books, cinema, pop music)
TV preferences (type of content)
TV relations (PSI, Capture, Long-term identification)
Dependence on TV

F. Child's world view and societal perceptions

Tendency to stereotype (Stewart)
Mental map (Gould)
Country preferred
Recent events within and outside Sweden (Himmelweit)
Size of professional groups (Gerbner)
Whom would you like to meet (Himmelweit)
Features most important for success
Dream job in future (Brodbason, Himmelweit)
Real job in future
Sex stereotypes about jobs (Jundin)

Table 1. Overview of Data Collected in the Media Panel Program
(The litterae correspond to the litterae of the boxes in Figure 6)

1,000 pairs of adolescents and their parents in the town of Växjö (southern Sweden, some 60,000 inhbts) are approached by means of classroom questionnaires and mail questionnaires, respectively. The sample is not a random one, but in co-operation with the school authorities great efforts have been made to cover satisfactorily the various types of schools to be found in the town. Since the main panel comprises almost all Växjö children belonging to the cohort born in 1965, we have good representativeness here. After several reminders to the parents and repeated visits to the schools more than 97 % of the children and 85 % of the parents returned usable questionnaires in the first wave. The data collection period of the second wave is not definitely finished at the moment of writing, but we are fairly confident that we will get much the same response rate in this wave.

The material collected in the first wave of the primary school panel has been duly processed and is now on tape (Johnsson-Smaragdi 1978 a,b). Some preliminary descriptive data have been presented by Ulla Johnsson-Smaragdi and Elias Hedinsson (1978) who are responsible for the data collection and analysis. Hedinsson and Johnsson-Smaragdi will use the first wave data for their dissertations. In the main, Johnsson-Smaragdi will apply a social-psychological perspective, concentrating primarily on boxes C, E and F of Figure 6 (heeding, of course, also the more sociological background variables). She will ask, then, how the child's media use is affected by its norms, motives etc, and what consequences the media use may have for the child. Hedinsson's perspective will be more sociological, asking how social class, relayed by family norms, affects media consumption and media relations (that is, boxes A, B, D and E of Figure 3). Hedinsson and Johnsson-Smaragdi will also work with the material collected in the following two waves of the panel. In these two waves, the data collected within the two panels of the program will gradually approach each other, so that ultimately more or less complete parallelity will be obtained.

4.3. Pre-school Panel and Primary School Panel Combined

Although stemming from the same basic theoretical perspective, the first waves of the primary school panel and the pre-school panel resulted in only partly identical materials, not least because of the great age difference between the two panels (6 years old vs. 11-15 years old). The children of the primary school panel, however, are by now eight years old, and when approached

in the third wave, they will be eleven. Therefore, the data collected within the two panels of the program will gradually reach, not total identity, but a very considerable overlap.

Year	Type of work etc	Publications etc
1969	Survey in Helsingborg (adults)	
1970	Survey in Växjö (adults)	Rosengren & Windahl 1972 a,b
1971	Survey in small village (adults)	
1972	Survey in Malmö (adults)	Rosengren & Windahl 1977
1973	Theoretical work	Rosengren 1974
1974	Survey with adolescents	Rosengren et al 1976
1975	Pilots for pre-school panel, Malmö	
	Pilots for primary school panel, Växjö	
	First wave pre-school panel	Dissertation by Inga Sonesson (1979)
1976	First wave primary school panel	Dissertations by Ulla Johnsson-Smaragdi and Elias Hedinsson (1979/80)
1977	Data analysis	Johnsson-Smaragdi 1978 a,b
		Hedinsson & Johnsson-Smaragdi 1978
1978	Second wave primary school panel	
1979	Second wave pre-school panel	Planned dissertation by Annelis Jönsson
1980	Third wave primary school panel	Separate reports from the two panels
1981	Third wave pre-school panel	
1982	FINAL REPORT OF PROGRAM	

Table 2. The Media Panel Program: An Overview

The results from each of the two panels will be presented in a separate report after the three waves are in. The reports from the two panels will then be summarized and compared to each other in a final report from the complete research programme, to be published in 1982 or 1983. By then, the work within the group will have been going on for about a dozen years, as summarized in

Table 2. The final report will be able to draw upon the experience and knowledge accumulated within the group during this time period. It will cover the social and individual origins of media use (especially TV), chart the differential use made of the media by individuals and try to estimate some possible consequences of that use. One main advantage of the report will be that its conclusions will be based on data from some 1,800 pairs of children and parents, some 700-800 of which will have been measured three times during a period of four to five years, a period during which they have approached, passed through and left behind that peak of television consumption occurring in Sweden at roughly the age of twelve.

5. OUTLOOK AND INVITATION

It is far too early, of course, to lay out in any detail the planned contents of the final report of the program. However, the theoretical conceptions and considerations which have guided the data collection will also guide the shaping of the report. And the data themselves - although we feel that they are rich and variegated - will restrict the options at our disposal. Therefore, it is possible even now to outline some elements in the final report to come. Some of these elements may be listed as follows.

A fairly detailed description of how TV enters the life of the pre-school child, how it becomes a dominant factor in the lives of the 12-year-old school-child, and how its importance is then again reduced in the life of the teenager.

The problem connected with the relative importance of generational and maturational effects in the developmental process just outlined.

The possible consequences of TV use on the self-image of the children, their job preferences, their tendency to stereotyping, their image of the surrounding society.

The role of TV and other mass media as functional alternatives to, and compensatory mechanisms for, more or less satisfactory social relations. The development of good and bad helical chains of effects in this respect.

Although the final report is planned as a book length study it is obvious that the material available within the program cannot possibly be exhausted within one report. Several 'special studies', not least of a methodological

nature, are therefore envisaged. We also hope that the data available within the program will draw the attention of researchers outside the group. Since in many cases we have been using instruments which have been used, and probably will be used, in other studies, the possibilities for comparative research would seem quite promising. Preliminary contacts have already been established with some Scandinavian researchers in this field, and we would welcome a similar development with respect to researchers in other fields, and in other parts of the world.

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